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Bionote

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Third party turns and shared knowledge: supports and challenges to disabled people in social care and research settings

Abstract

Adopting a conversation analysis (CA) perspective, this paper explores data which include disabled people in three-party contexts, where the institutional goal is to focus on the wishes, voice and agency of the disabled person. It explores 274 occasions where a third party self-selects for a turn, during social care planning meetings and research interviews. Five broad action patterns are discussed, showing how third parties used their epistemic closeness to the disabled person in order to 1) clarify; 2) usurp; 3) prompt; 4) expand; and 5) challenge. The sequential consequence of these turns depended on how they were heard and taken up by other parties in the talk. The vast majority of third party turns could be glossed as supportive to the disabled person. Third parties displayed their sensitivity towards the precise moment that they were ‘needed’ in the talk. Occasionally, there were challenges and counterinformings done by the third party, which could be analysed as ‘epistemic traps’. These moments signaled tensions between the best interests of the disabled person and the imperative to foreground their voice.

Key words

Disability, person-centredness, conversation analysis, multi-party talk, self-selection, epistemics.

1. Introduction

The traditional positioning of disabled people as ‘objects of care’ has been challenged both by disabled people themselves (Oliver 1990; Finkelstein 2004) and by international law (UN 2007). UK social care policy (Department of Health [DH] 2006; 2012) frames the service user as an active citizen with rights and responsibilities. Played out in interactions, this notion of active agency is frequently referred to as ‘person-centredness’ (Sanderson 2000; Rogers 2004; Williams, 2013: Chapter 7), a term which signals the goal of placing the disabled person’s own wishes, voice and decisions at the heart of the discussion (Routledge and Sanderson 2002). Whether or not the disabled person is assessed as lacking capacity to decide on their social care under the 2005 Mental Capacity Act, personal budget users in England are afforded the chance to do ‘support planning’ (DH 2012) with some facilitation from a social worker or another practitioner. In this paper we refer to these facilitators as ‘support planners’.

In a social care support planning session, much is at stake for both the disabled person and their family member or supporter, and the outcomes of the session will likely determine the shape of their services over the upcoming period of time. In this paper, however, we also explore data from a second context, namely that of research interviews, where the talk may have a generalized effect on the provision of services, but will not affect the particular services offered to that individual. Although the activity context is thus different, a very similar goal of person-centredness is also important when disabled people are participants in qualitative research projects (van den Berg et al 2001: 1; see also Silverman 1973; Baker 2004; Roulston 2006 for an overview). Both types of social event attempt to put the disabled service user ‘at the centre’, fostering his or her own self-determination (see Morris 2003; Watson et al. 2007; Franklin and

Sloper 2009 for practice literature relating to disability research and participant voice). Both contexts have an agenda which is set by the practitioner or the researcher rather than by the disabled person himself and in both cases, disabled people are often accompanied by supporters or family members, whose role in the talk can be crucial (Pilnick et al. 2010; 2011). Third parties, as they are termed here, were engaged in dyadic communication with the professional during large sections of the data. That is not the focus of this paper, which instead aims to explore only the interactional consequences when supporters or family members *self-selected* for turns at talk during a) social care planning sessions and b) research interviews.

The paper proceeds next with some background points from the CA literature about third party speakers in institutional encounters, and outlines some of the insights about epistemic status which are fundamental to our analysis. Following a short introduction to our participants and settings, we analyse typical examples of various actions accomplished by third party turns in the data, starting with the very frequent ‘supportive’ actions, and then analyzing in some more depth what happens when there are challenges or conflicts between third party and disabled person. The final section discusses these findings in relation to epistemics, reflecting on the notion of an ‘epistemic trap’, as well as the implications for practitioners.

2. Background

The ‘transcontextual’ building blocks of social order (Drew 1990: 28) can play out in different ways, depending on the different epistemic status of each participant in talk, and also their relative power and emotional status (Stevanovic and Perakyla 2012; 2014). For instance in multi-party talk, the rules of next-speaker selection (Sacks *et al.* 1974) may be flouted, particularly for those framed as less-than-competent members (Rapley 2004; Antaki et al. 2006; 2007; Wilkinson et al. 2010; Bolden 2012). When selected as next speaker in mundane

situations, the disabled speaker's turn slot is regularly occupied by a third speaker, often someone close to the disabled person (Williams, 2011). Selection of third parties as respondents is also frequent in institutional encounters involving children (Aronsson and Rundstrom 1988; Tate and Meeuwesen, 2001; Stivers 2001; Cahill and Papageorgiou 2007; Rindstedt 2014) and older people who are accompanied when visiting the doctor (Laidsaar-Powell et al. 2013). Thus losing a turn at talk is a routine occurrence for some categories of individuals (Bolden 2012), and can result in foregrounding one's incompetence (Simonen 2012; Brouwer 2012). In institutional encounters, people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities may thus face two connected forms of asymmetry, namely that connected with the authority of the practitioner, and the epistemic authority of their own companion or supporter. As Bolden (2012: 115) suggests, 'participants can use asymmetries in their language (and cultural) competencies to gain (and/or be granted) the right to speak on behalf of others'.

To make sense of this type of knowledge-based interpersonal authority, it is important to recognize that speakers are ordinarily expected to have privileged access to information in their own personal domain (Raymond and Heritage 2006; Heritage 2012); however, in multi-party conversations, each participant will share some aspects of their own knowledge with others, who in turn could challenge or dispute what one would wish to say. While this may be done in the interests of progressivity, or 'getting the business done' (Stivers 2001; Stivers and Robinson 2006; Svennevig 2010), nevertheless the epistemic status of a speaker (Heritage 2012) can be affected by the stance taken in the talk, and in this case particularly when a turn is usurped by a third party. As Stevanovic *et al.* (2014) demonstrate, people regularly make sense of each other's utterances by 'categorizing that person' in a specific way, and thus to understand the way in

which some disabled people routinely lose their own right to speak entails a consideration of the relationships of power and knowledge which are displayed in talk.

In exploring interactional sequences where a third party has self-selected, during discussions involving a disabled person, we pursue three main goals in this paper: a) to determine the various types of talk-based action which a third party self-selected turn may fulfill; b) add to debates about epistemics; and c) explore the interactional tension between progressivity and person-centredness in these two contrasting settings.

3. Data

The two studies from which data were taken (Study 1: Williams, Porter and Marriott, 2014; Study 2: Williams, Porter and Strong, 2013; Williams and Porter, 2015), both aimed to explore the experiences of disabled people using personal budgets in England (Department of Health 2012). Both studies had ethical approval from national committees, and took into account the provisions of the 2005 Mental Capacity Act (England and Wales), since some of the participants would lack capacity to consent to the research. In those cases, personal consultees were sought, who were invariably a close family member. Thus the tight connection between family carer and disabled person was an important factor in the design, set up and ethical issues about participation, before the data had even been collected.

Four recordings (261 minutes in total) were made in Study 2 of ‘naturally occurring’ talk during support planning sessions with just two participants, Kia and Khalil, both young people with intellectual disabilities at the stage of ‘transition’ where they were planning their future services as adults; one of them (Kia) had very limited verbal expressive ability. Khalil and his social

worker took part in three linked, recorded sessions, each separated by a few weeks. One of Khalil's support planning sessions was self-recorded by the practitioner and the other three recordings were made by a researcher. While video analysis would have been preferable, particularly in order to include the non-verbal signals of turn selection, it was unfortunately impossible to obtain ethical clearance for the use of video in either of these studies, and the limited amount of data overall was due to difficulties in obtaining practitioner consent.

Because of those limitations, we selected four interviews (289 minutes) from a far larger set of qualitative research interviews with disabled people in Study 1, in order to obtain a variety of participants, and to test out the robustness of the phenomena we identified. The research interview data here followed a semi-structured, open-ended approach to interviewing, where the interviewer has a topic guide, but does not follow a script (broadly, what Roulston 2010: 16, refers to as 'phenomenological interviewing'). This second set of participants included a range of disabled people, all with some type of cognitive difficulty, and in all cases, the research interviewer was the first author, and a third party was present. Details of all the participants are provided in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

4. Findings

Over the four support planning sessions, and the four interviews selected for analysis, a total of 274 instances were found (see Table 2), where the third party self-selected for a turn, either when the disabled person or the professional should be 'next speaker'. The phenomenon is frequent enough, in other words, to make a reasonably large collection of instances over just these eight

occasions, and is not an unusual occurrence. However, the third party self-selections could not all be said to perform the same action, as revealed by the consequences in subsequent talk, and in fact occur systematically in different environments in the talk, as we shall explore.

Insert Table 2 about here

4.1 Third party turn clarifies an aspect of the talk

The first action we explore consists of 32 instances which could be glossed as a type of repair work (Kitzinger 2013: 249) where the third party self-selects to help clarify or rectify some perceived misunderstanding (Robinson and Kevoe-Feldman 2010). Extract 1 is from a support planning session, in which support planner Jon is speaking with Khalil, a young man with intellectual disabilities, and his mother Rebekah.

See Appendix for transcription conventions.

Extract 1	Khalil (Session 2, Study 2)
372 Jon:	so you're going to see them next ↑March
373 Kha:	yeah next March
374 Jon:	fantastic
375 Kha:	I'm going park
376 Jon:	are you looking ↑forward to that
377 Reb: →	(££) °he's going to the park°
378 Jon:	he's going to ↑where
379 Reb:	park
380 Jon:	oh you're [going to go to the park

381 Reb: [()
 382 Kha: me me and Mark and Trevor
 383 Jon: brilliant in March so hopefully it'll be sunny to
 384 go to the park

In line 372, the support planner, Jon, confirms what Khalil had indicated, that he was planning to see his relations next March, and that sequence plays off neatly, with a confirmation and an upgraded evaluation in third position: 'fantastic' at line 374. It is in the following two lines that the confusion appears to lie: Khalil continues with what turns out to be 'I'm going park', although the support planner's comment in response on line 376 can be taken either as referring to the park, or to the previous talk about visiting his relatives. The mother, Rebekah, then steps in with her self-selected turn at line 377, revealing that she has oriented to the possibility that Jon's talk is still about the relatives. This is shown by the fact that she clarifies what Khalil had said: 'he's going to the park'; additional evidence of Jon's confusion lies in how he takes the clarification, 'he's going to ↑where' at line 378.

This type of monitoring of the mutual understanding of the disabled person and practitioner is typical of work done by third parties, both in interviews and support planning sessions, and it can be seen here how any indication that the practitioner may have misheard or failed to take up a particular turn is dealt with promptly by the third party, despite the threat this repair sequence causes to progressivity (Robinson 2006). Note too how the mother's clarification turn in this case is based on close knowledge of what her son might say about his activities. Interestingly, she delivers her clarification in a laugh voice, signaling her stance towards the confusion that has occurred. In successive turns, Khalil has now mentioned visits to his wider family, and also a

plan to go to the park (perhaps a much more mundane everyday occurrence), and so the laughter may have to do with his seeming incompetence in the conversation and the disalignment between mother and son occasioned by the repair sequence (Robinson 2006). Interestingly though, the support planner uses the mother's clarification to turn back to Khalil, as if Khalil himself had supplied the repair: 'oh you're going to the park', and Khalil does in fact then bring the two topics of 'park' and 'relatives' together. It turns out that he had not been talking about simply going off to the park, but was planning to take his relatives to the park (presumably when he sees them in March). That, at any rate, is how he is heard by Jon:

- 382 Kha: me me and Mark and Trevor
 383 Jon: brilli↓ant in March so hopefully it'll be sunny to
 384 go to the park

This small example thus illustrates some of the complex permutations that can occur even in seemingly straightforward clarification sequences. Recall that the third party is invariably someone who has good reason to know what the disabled person might be saying, and acts out that knowledge for the benefit of the practitioner, who, in Heritage's (2012: 4) terms is relatively low on the epistemic gradient (knowledge minus or K-) in relation to the possible activities, topics or wishes of the disabled person.

In terms of sequential consequences, Jon used the clarification to enable a further sequence with Khalil, but that pattern was not universal. It was also perfectly possible for the third party clarification to effectively shift the speaker's focus away from the disabled person, as happens in Extract 2, where the researcher (Val) is talking with Lea, in the presence of both her parents. The mother, Sara, intervenes at line 83, to deliver information which is then taken up with an

acknowledgement by the researcher, leading to a much longer turn by Sara at line 85, only part of which is given here:

Extract 2 Lea (Study 1)

- 81 Val: so really your support has always been
82 roughly the same↑ or –
83 Sar: → no it's been changing gradually yeah
84 Val: I can imagine
85 Sar: it has and depending on the days

A third party self-selection can thus be taken by the first speaker in various ways, as repair or as newsworthy in its own right. Note however that in these examples there are no overt signs of misunderstanding, such as repair initiators, but rather signs of dissatisfaction by third parties about how the disabled person's turn was treated. The interactional consequence can either be for the disabled person to continue to elaborate on his or her own affairs, or for the third party to take over as primary speaker. These variations will be explored further below.

4.2 Third party uses a turn to respond instead of the disabled person

A second, rather larger, set of 82 instances explored in the data were those in which third parties self-selected for a turn which was not oriented towards repair, but was simply a candidate second part. An example from a research interview is given here, in which Val is the researcher, talking to Mike, an older disabled man, and his partner Clare. Mike has already said that one of the most important things to him is his art work.

Extract 3 Mike (Study 1)

21 Val: so are you doing any artwork now ↑M[ike
 22 Cla: → [well you
 23 were and I'll try [and get hold of those
 24 Mik: [mmm
 25 ((*sound of door creaking*))
 26 Val: no- not at the moment↑ [ye:ah
 27 Mik: [no
 28 Val: w- would you like to be (.) doing some more
 29 art
 30 Mik: yes
 31 Val: yeah (0.2) going with the art ↑yeah (0.5)

The background assumptions or implications in the question posed by the interviewer in line 21 are overtly understood differently here by Mike himself and by his partner Clare. In her self-selected response at lines 22-23, Clare hears this as an invitation to show off Mike's art work, his talent, and maybe also his ongoing activity level with art. Note also that, instead of simply usurping Mike's turn and answering for him, the pronominal reference is directed towards Mike: 'well you were', allowing the possibility for Mike to confirm. Her turn-initial 'well' (Heritage 2014) may also signal that she is pre-empting and countering a negative from Mike, and interpreting the researcher's turn at line 21 as a pre to an invitation to show Mike's art. Whatever the case, she sets off out of the room and the conversational space in order to find the pictures to show the researcher.

It was relatively easy to find other examples in the data where the third party self-selection not only signaled a particular interpretation of the implication of the practitioner's question, but worked to pre-empt a dispreferred response by the disabled person. For instance, in a support planning session, the following occurred:

Extract 4 Kia (Study 2)

274. Nat: so you leave school don't you when ↓ you're a
275. woman (.) you don't go to school when
276. you're an old lady –
277. Jan:→ oh she's started her voluntary work
278. Nat oh ↑right
279. Jan I forgot to tell you about that

Here, Natalie, the support planner, was preparing Kia, a rather silent young person with intellectual disabilities, for the idea of 'transition planning' for adulthood, and started off with the idea of leaving school. As her mother Jan heard this, the question sprang from the implication that Kia was still only and uniquely at school, and so would not understand the activities of being an adult. That at any rate is how her turn at line 277 can be heard, prefaced by 'oh' (Heritage 2002) and carrying with it the counter implication that Kia has already done some voluntary work, and so maybe is already in that 'transition phase'. She even accounts for her intervention in line 279, with 'I forgot to tell you about that', indicating that this may be an important piece of the jigsaw of information needed by the support planner. At the same time, however, Jan's turn works to silence any possible response from Kia directly. Pre-empting or clarifying the purpose of the question can thus rather neatly be done by third party interventions in the talk.

Again, however, as with the first pattern, there are possible variations in the sequential consequence of this type of turn selection. In Extract 3 above, the third party speaker had left the room at line 25, and the implication of Mike's minimal response (mmm) together with his partner Clare's implied negative (well you were), is taken up in the researcher's very negatively tilted reformulation of Clare's talk at line 26: 'no-not at the moment↑ ye:ah'. This gives Mike a slot to respond, albeit with a minimum yes/no response, and enables the researcher to build a contrast between the present and the future. All this, together with Clare's impending re-entry into the room bearing his sketches, is based on the presumption that Mike in fact is an artist. Not only is he given a turn slot to re-enter the conversation, but his competence in art underpins this sequence. Similarly, it could be argued that Jan's turn in Extract 4 above serves to foreground the 'worker' identity that her daughter Kia has attained. However, in doing that, she starts up a brief sequence in which Natalie's attention is turned away from Kia as a speaker, and towards herself. The interactional consequence is that the following six turns are taken up by the mum, Jan, talking directly with Natalie, culminating in Jan giving some details of Kia's work, with an overt attempt to switch from 'she' to 'you' and bring her daughter back in to the conversation:

285 she's got a uniform with a name badge↓ she has to serve tables and take cakes don't you↑

Thus the way in which the first speaker (practitioner) takes the self-selected turn by a third party can both signal how she had interpreted the implication of that turn, but can also affect the subsequent flow of talk. At times, the intervention is taken as providing substantial information of consequence to the purpose of the meeting, as acknowledged by Natalie with 'oh right↑' in Extract 4. At other times, however, a third party turn is taken rather as a clarification, or even some type of ventriloquism, with the third party speaking *instead of* or *in the voice of* the disabled person. In Extract 3, that pattern was more evident, with Clare's 'well you were'

enabling the researcher to assume this information had been given in effect jointly by Clare and Mike, needing no further response from Mike as to its veracity. However, one can see here also how the need to progress the talk entails a shaping up of the identity positions of Kia (as worker) and Mike (as artist), sometimes in direct conflict with the honoring of their epistemic status in the conversation itself.

4.3 Third party does joint work with first speaker to prompt or give an opener to the disabled person

A further identified set of 82 self-selected turns in this data set were those in which a third party speaker self-selected after a turn by the professional, effectively aligning with the project of that turn, and addressing the disabled person. These were extremely frequent for Kia, as shown in Table 2, largely because she remained silent through much of the session, and so her mother often aligned with a prompt and gave more information to encourage or give a clue to Kia about what to say.

Joint prompts were less common in all the other seven sessions, but looking across the interview and support planning data, there were some interesting variants. In Extract 5, Gail was accompanied by an advocate, Jenny, who had already explained how closely the pair knew each other. Jenny's turn at line 72 follows after a few intervening turns, effectively following up the researcher's question at line 65 which was pursuing a point Gail had raised about having three particular goals in life.

Extract 5 Gail (Study 1)

65 Val: sorry three things (.)↑you were saying

72 Jen:→ yes so one of the things that you said was

73		that you wanted a ↑bungalo:w
74	Gai	not not some people like you were saying but
75		just have it normal (0.2)
76	Val	° mmhm ° just have it normal
77	Jen	do you want to live with other ↑people
78		or did you want to live by ↓yourself
79	Gai	° by meself° =
80	Jen	+ yeah
81	Gai	with Jo and with Jo and – just not have it
82		sandpapered but like - with Sal
83		and all an have like it here like and just be here

The shared epistemic status of third party and disabled person (albeit not a familial one in this example) can be invoked, as it is here, by prior conversations ('one of the things that you said') in which the disabled speaker is reminded of things they have articulated, and which they could refer to here in the present context. In summary, these prompt turns occur after a question from Speaker 1 (the professional) to Speaker 2 (the disabled person), and can be constructed as tag questions, or as polar questions which refer to earlier shared talk, as in Extract 5. The common feature is the inclusion of a vocabulary item which specifically refers to the joint epistemic domain of the third party and the disabled person, and they are always directed to the disabled person rather than to the first speaker. The inclusion of this term, however, provides a nugget of 'news' for all parties, and so the danger is that it can be responded to by the professional as newsworthy in its own right, and that did happen on some occasions, especially when the

primary respondent was silent. Maybe the reference to past talk ('you were saying') acts as a protective factor for the disabled person, keeping the response in their domain.

4.4 Third party turn challenges or implies that the disabled person's turn was inadequate

We now turn to some slightly more problematic moments. Although less frequent than prompts and clarification turns, third party interventions could also occur *after* a response from the disabled person, maybe re-formulating (Bolden 2010), enlarging or even correcting what had been said. Some of these occasions concerned some quite sensitive issues, a fact made explicit in the following sequence, where Natalie, the support planner, had been asking Kia about how she could cope if she arrived home alone.

Extract 6 Kia (Study 2)

1. Nat how do you feel about (.) is that al↑right or
2. not al↓right
3. Kia yeah
4. Nat is it ↑OK (.) ↓cool so at the moment you can
5. cope with that
6. Mum because you know mummy always comes back
7. wouldn't you↓ you're not – kia has a thing whenever
8. I go out *come back mum come back* I
9. say ↑*don't I always come back*
10. £and then she just laughs£

It is interesting to note how Kia's mum addresses her talk both to Kia (with a 'you') but in the same turn also gives information about the situation to the support planner, Natalie (referring to

Kia in the third person). A similar point occurred in Study 1 with Mary whose mother was present, but silent during most of the talk, leaving Mary to answer for herself. In the interests of anonymity, the full extract is not given here, but suffice to say that Mary had responded with a minimal ‘yeah’ to a question concerning her food preferences, and her mother then came in with the following:

37. Jul you have to be careful don’t you not to eat to:: much (.) and to
 make good choices (.) in your ↓food and eat (.) healthy

Here, the mother Julie’s turn does not in any sense challenge what Mary has said, but in fact addresses her directly with ‘you’, adding some detailed information about her diet choices. By supplying a second candidate answer to the researcher’s question, this response however implies that the minimal ‘yeah’ was inadequate, and such implied inadequacy can have interactional consequences, as we shall see below in some further examples.

4.5 Third party turn openly disagrees, challenges or re-shapes disabled person’s contribution

Third party self-selections, as we have seen throughout this paper, are endemic in discussions involving a disabled person, and we have shown the various supportive functions they can fulfil, often revealing subtle nuances in the way the third party monitored the talk and interpreted the possible actions or topical agendas of the original question (Hayano 2013: 402). However, once the third party speaker has a slot to talk, they effectively have a platform to intervene substantively and to produce a ‘counterinforming’ (Robinson 2009). Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the following example from the very beginning of a support planning session:

Extract 7 Khalil (Session 3, Study 2)

1. Jon the reason why we're meeting here today Khalil IS (.)
2. to do: something that's called your sup↑port ↓plan
3. (0.5) and thats- means we're going to get together
4. and write down (.) ho:w your needs are going to ↓met
5. and what activities you're going to do such
6. as going to ↑college (.) ye: ↑ ah and going to the new place
7. (.) in Anford↓ (0.5) ↑what do you think about that
8. Kha I want the same place (as) Shirley before
9. Jon ↑shirley
10. Reb → °no shirleys not going to the same place ↓Khalil°
11. Jon eerr I don't know who Shirley is is that a friend of ↑yours
12. Kha it's my girlfriend =
13. Jon = your girl↓ friend and ↑ where does she go to (.) I thought
14. the last time we met you had a girlfriend –
15. a new girlfriend at college did you ↑not
16. Kha °no°=
17. Jon = no↑
18. Kha (I've got Shirley now)

The main point of interest here is how Rebekah's, the mother's, self-selection at line 10 is dealt with. Jon, the support planner, starts this session with some agenda setting, directed entirely towards Khalil, and giving him repeated opportunities to take up a turn, with pauses, use of Khalil's name, and finally a direct appeal 'what do you think of that?'. Khalil picks up explicitly

on the ‘going to the new place’, and delivers a dispreferred second part at line 8: ‘I want the same place as Shirley before’; effectively this is a nonconforming response (Raymond 2003) since it does more than simply respond to the question ‘what do you think of that?’. The introduction of new information about ‘Shirley’ however creates some epistemic problems for Jon, who admits that he does not know who Shirley is.

The trouble caused in the talk points to how Jon’s question is taken both by the mother and the son. Jon is not asking Khalil genuinely ‘what do you think about that?’, but is suggesting to him that he should agree with the plan as written. Rebekah’s first self-selected turn at line 10 is directed towards Khalil himself, in a noticeably quieter register than the surrounding talk, marking her utterance out as distinct from the institutional talk of the support planning session. This is in some respects a counter to the counter-informing Khalil has already done, but does contain within it (see Robinson 2009: 570) precisely the information which might reconcile the two incompatible positions taken up by Jon and Khalil. Note that Rebekah does not question the identity of Shirley, but takes her as a given, and thus the short utterance at line 10 comes over as a continuation of a conversation marked by a shared epistemology between Khalil and his mother. This places Jon, the support planner, in a decidedly knowledge minus position, and he accounts for his confusion on this point at line 11: ‘I don’t know who Shirley is’. What Jon’s accounting does is to make visible the fact that Shirley may in fact matter in the line of argument about the day centre placement. Much depends on who she is, and Khalil seizes on that with the upgraded claim, not just of friendship, but that Shirley is his ‘girlfriend’.

At lines 13-15 Jon then challenges and downplays the status of permanent ‘girlfriend’ by mentioning the possibility that Khalil had other girlfriends in the recent past; that ploy also fails with Khalil’s firm ‘no’ at line 16, and his reiteration of ‘I’ve got Shirley now’, and the conversation continues with the overt goal of winning over Khalil’s acceptance of the day centre placement in question. What we can start to see here is not only how mother and son build their remarks to each other on a shared epistemological domain of reference, but how that tightly shared background can, albeit on rare occasions, create an epistemic trap for the disabled person. Khalil’s stated preference in line 8 to go to the same place as his girlfriend is challenged, on the grounds that a) Shirley is not going to the same place; and b) maybe she is not his main girlfriend. Both these counter-arguments rely on varying degrees of shared knowledge (about Khalil’s life and his friends) and intrude very strongly on Khalil’s personal epistemic domain. Note however how Khalil responds to the support planner’s question about his girlfriends (with a ‘no’) but not to his mother’s quiet, but firm, assertion that Shirley is ‘not going to the same place’. There would be a possibility here that the line of argument with his mother belongs to a different, more personal domain, and he is showing some sensitivity here in not pursuing it during the meeting. Whatever the case, without that intervention from his mother, Khalil’s reliance on the girlfriend argument could have steered the events in a very different direction.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In setting out this paper, our three main goals were to determine the actions fulfilled by third-party turn selections in the two ‘person-centred’ contexts we examined, to add to debates about epistemics, and to say something about the interactional tension between progressivity and person-centredness. First, the five types of actions performed by third party self-selections in this

paper were overwhelmingly about third parties providing clarifications, prompts or support to the disabled person, displaying concern with accuracy, clarity, and mutual understanding of the disabled person and the professional participant. Further, just as in Stivers (2001) and Rindstedt (2014), third parties also took up the overt concern to foreground the voice of their disabled relative, providing helpfully refined questions which were designed to bring the disabled person into the talk, thus expertly monitoring each nuance of the talk, so that they could support in a timely manner the goals of person-centredness.

Secondly, all this work made visible the shared epistemic status of these two people; in each case, the third party was someone who had a shared pool of background knowledge about the experiences of the disabled person, could refer to previous conversations about these matters on which they could draw, and moreover made visible their concerns to supplement the responses that the disabled person might make. The third party frequently acted as an interpreter, as in Rindstedt (2014), not only clarifying, but explaining to the practitioner what type of questions might be meaningful to the disabled person. None of this work was oriented to as ‘remarkable’ or surprising; it seemed that these were routine functions for third parties to perform in the talk. Not only were these third party interventions sensitively timed and positioned, but the sequential consequences and uptake of the self-selected turn were crucial. What the practitioner did in next turn position revealed how they heard the third party intervention, and also determined the options open to the disabled person to re-enter the conversation. While initially (relatively) K- in terms of their knowledge about the disabled person’s life and concerns, the professional could pick up from the third party talk much more accurate ways of referring to the disabled person’s life. However, it is also true that joint talk relying on a shared epistemic domain could limit the

choices here-and-now for the disabled person, as was evident in the final extract. It was the social-epistemic relationship between Khalil and his mother, as pointed out by Robinson (2009: 583), that framed and constituted challenges, and a type of epistemic trap. Without the presence of someone who knows the intimate details of one's life, any speaker will have a greater degree of discursive freedom to determine his or her own responses and choices.

Thirdly, in the very few examples of challenges presented by the third party, it could be argued that the third party was orienting more to progressivity (Stivers and Robinson 2006), rather than to the rights of the disabled person to speak, and this created some tensions in both the research interviews and in the support planning sessions. However, as noted earlier, the two contexts explored here would present very different imperatives, both to the disabled person but also to their companion. Could it be that the lack of capacity of some participants would lead to a greater imperative for third party interventions and clarifications, and that this effect might be greatest in social care planning? It may be noteworthy that only six conflicts between disabled person and third party occurred during the interviews, while there were 17 examples in support planning sessions. However, in both contexts, there were points at which what mattered most was to reveal the impairment-related needs of the disabled person (Simonen 2012) rather than to orient to their competence to react and respond within the here-and-now of the interactional order.

Further research is needed in similar settings based on video as well as audio recording, as many of the cues to third-party self selections may be very sensitive to the non-verbal features of the talk, including gaze, facial expression and body position. However, based on the analysis in this

paper, the conclusion has to be that third-party interventions during institutional encounters with disabled people can be important both in supporting and challenging the ‘person-centredness’ of the talk. There is a fine and sensitive line between a) interactional support, via prompts or clarifications, and b) the creation of incompetence or challenge to the disabled person, and much depended on the uptake by the professional. An analysis of third-party self-selections can thus enable both social care practitioners and researchers to understand and perhaps manage third-party self-selected turns more effectively when facilitating person-centred talk with a disabled person.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions

(.)	just noticeable pause
(0.5)	timed pause
↑ ↓	onset of noticeable pitch rise or fall
[start of overlapping talk
wor-	sharp cut-off
:	stretched sound
()	unclear talk
=	no pause between 2 turns (latched turns)
°word °	quiet talk
WORD	caps for emphasis in intonation
£	laughter
<i>word</i>	italics for quoted speech

Table 1 **Details of participants**

	Qualitative research interview data (=Int)				Support Planning data (= SP)	
Pseudonym	Gail	Mary	Lea	Mike	Kia	Khalil (3 sessions)
Disabled person	Visual impairment; mental health problem, Intellectual disability. Age 40-50.	Intellectual disability. Age: 20-30.	Intellectual disability. Age 30-40.	Physical and mental health disabilities and some cognitive problems. Age 70+	Intellectual disability – expressive speech limited to one word or short responses. Age 18.	Intellectual disability. Age 18-20.
Third parties	Jenny , advocate	Julie , parent	Sara and another parent, though only Sara took part in interview	Clare , partner	Jan , foster mother	Rebekah , mother
Role of professional	Val , Researcher	Val , Researcher	Val , Researcher	Val , Researcher	Natalie , support planner from voluntary organisation.	Jon , transition social worker

Table 2 **Instances of each pattern of self-selected third party turns in interviews and support planning sessions**

		Qualitative research interview data (Study 1)				Support Planning data (Study 2)				
Main action performed	Pattern	Gail	Mary	Lea	Mike	Kia	Khali 1	Khalil 2	Khalil 3	Totals
Clarify	1	5	4	7	0	1	3	6	6	32
Answer	2	6	11	14	10	25	6	1	9	82
Prompt	3	7	11	6	3	41	4	2	8	82
Enlarge	4	0	6	22	7	6	5	3	6	55
Challenge	5	0	1	5	0	6	2	1	8	23
		18	33	54	20	79	20	13	37	274
	Mins of data	<i>43</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>550</i>

